



News Release

Bill Williams River
National Wildlife Refuge
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LAKE HAVASU FISHING AND ACCESS FACILITY COMPLETED

Bill Williams River and Cibola National Wildlife Refuges Celebrate National Wildlife Refuges' Centennial

The completion of a network of fishing sites, trails and shoreline access areas, and the centennial of the National Wildlife Refuge System were celebrated at a dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony at Bill Williams River National Wildlife Refuge, north of Parker on Friday.

A quarter-mile of paved, handicapped accessible trails connect two fishing piers, with a third to be added in January, five shade ramadas, two fish cleaning stations, restrooms and numerous interpretive panels. Over 260 native shrubs and trees, including a butterfly garden, were planted. Solar power supplies electricity to the trails and user-area lighting, and water to the drip irrigation and cleaning station. A designated, non-motorized boat ramp provides a much-needed safe location for launching canoes, kayaks and rowboats.

"Being able to celebrate the opening of these new facilities with the host of project partners was fitting; we wouldn't have been able to construct all this without their dedicated assistance and 5000 thousand hours of volunteer help," said refuge manager Dick Gilbert.

The celebration drew agency heads, elected officials and dignitaries as well as many of those who coordinated the planning efforts and others who labored to move earth and rock, construct fishing facilities, build trails, wire lighting and plant native vegetation.

The facility is the final addition to a series of fishing access sites envisioned by the Lake Havasu Fisheries Improvement Program. The program was established in 1992 to improve sport fishing, augment dwindling populations of the once-plentiful endangered razorback sucker and bonytail chub, and improve access and facilities for shoreline anglers. Program partners are the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Arizona Game and Fish Department, California Department of Fish and Game, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and Anglers United.

A half-mile peninsula at the southeast end of Lake Havasu was created by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation as a breakwater for the Central Arizona Project inlet and initial pumping station in the 1970s. Despite its boulder-strewn surface and hardly-accessible steep banks, the multi-agency and angler-led Lake Havasu Fisheries Improvement Program recognized the peninsula for its potential as a fishing site. Together with local businesses and La Paz County, the Program tackled the design, coordination and red tape inherent in such a project. Additional financial contributions were made by the Arizona State Lake Improvement Fund. The sweat of countless volunteers and the U.S. Navy Seabees completed the project "ahead of schedule and under budget," noted Duane Shroufe, Arizona

Game and Fish Department Director.

Dedication keynote speaker Lynn Greenwalt, Refuge Centennial Commissioner and former Fish and Wildlife Service Director, stated that “people will look back at this project and realize that it is only through this sort of collaborative effort that projects of this magnitude can be accomplished; it’s our only means of fulfilling our responsibility to future generations and to wildlife resources.”

Attendees were treated to lunch, live music, and a boat tour of fisheries improvement sites and activities. The tour included the stocking of 300 forearm-length endangered bonytail chubs and the sinking of 10'x4' bundles of vegetation that will serve as fish habitat.

The new Lake Havasu fishing and boat launch site is located the Bill Williams River National Wildlife Refuge headquarters, on the west side of AZ Highway 95 between mile posts 160 and 161 (18 miles south of Lake Havasu City). Facilities are presently open only during refuge business hours, but 24-hour use will be available soon.

To intervene in declining shore- and seabird populations and habitat, President Theodore Roosevelt established the 3-acre Pelican Island Bird Reservation in Florida on March 14, 1903. Since then, the National Wildlife Refuge System has grown to more than 95 million acres, including over 540 refuges. In Arizona, there are nine refuges along the Colorado River and U.S.-Mexico border totaling more than 1.7 million acres.

Cibola National Wildlife Refuge

The fishing site dedication was the penultimate event in the year of refuge centennial celebrations in Arizona. On Saturday, 43 Service and Bureau of Land Management employees, AmeriCorps members, Service volunteers and local residents combined forces for a tree planting festival at Cibola National Wildlife Refuge, 20 miles southeast of Blythe. 1,400 honey and screwbean mesquite, wolfberry and cottonwoods were planted in upland riparian habitat along the Colorado River.

“Our dedicated volunteer staff helped to make this event possible, logging over 250 hours preparing the planting area and completing other tasks,” said refuge manager Tom Alexander.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses 542 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

<http://arizonaes.fws.gov>

Editors’ Note: Digital (jpg) photo support of the dedication and ribbon-cutting are available at <http://arizonaes.fws.gov/news.htm> or via email by contacting Jeff Humphrey at 602-242-0210 or jeff_humphrey@fws.gov